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### The Art Historian With a Movie Camera. Paul Haesaerts's Practice of Art Criticism Through Photography and Film

The rise of mechanical reproduction techniques like photography and film have irrevocably altered the critical discipline of art history. Not only did the ubiquitous availability of photographic and filmic images catalyze the methods of comparing artworks on a global scale, it also drastically changed practices of art criticism. Belgian art historian Paul Haesaerts was highly aware of the challenges and possibilities this process offered. During the 1940s and 1950s, he produced numerous illustrated books and films on art, in which he aimed to evoke a new form of art analysis using the language and mechanisms of photography and film.

This paper deals with the interaction and evolution of Haesaerts's pictorial strategies in his post-war books and documentaries on the visual arts. In his art books, Haesaerts developed his arguments first and foremost by means of photographic illustrations. Yet while the medium of photography supplied the materials of his art books, it was cinema that provided its organizational model. Developing his concept of *cinema critique*, Haesaerts's films on Rubens (1948), Picasso (1950) and Ensor (1952), among others, transpose the visual strategies of his art books to the silver screen. In addition, Haesaerts presents both his photographically illustrated books and documentaries on the visual arts as analytical tools, capable of constructing a discourse based on the juxtapositions, successions, and close-ups of photographic images.

Dealing with Haesaerts's theories, this paper aims to answer questions such as the following: How does Haesaerts translate the disciplines of art history and art criticism into his photographs and films? How does Haesaerts's photographic art books function as a cinematic exercise, inspired by the montage, framings, and close-ups of film? And how can one situate Haesaerts's experiments in in the debate on new techniques of mechanical reproduction in the writings of Walter Benjamin, André Malraux, and Erwin Panofsky?

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**Joséphine Vandekerckhove** studied Art History at Ghent University and at Sapienza Università di Roma and did a postgraduate programme in Curatorial Studies at Ghent University/Hogeschool Ghent (KASK). She is currently enrolled as a PhD student (Fellow of the Research Foundation – Flanders) at the Department of Art, Theatre and Music Sciences of Ghent University and Università di Verona. Her PhD research focuses on a comparative study of mid-twentieth-century art documentaries of the art historians and filmmakers Paul Haesaerts and Carlo Ludovico Ragghianti in Belgium and Italy, under supervision of professor Steven Jacobs.